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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/656,643	09/05/2003	Geoffrey Alan Williams	P15650	8108
7590	11/29/2004		EXAMINER	
JOHN K. McCULLOCH 1ST FLOOR 5291 COLONY DRIVE NORTH SAGINAW, MI 48603			GELLNER, JEFFREY L	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3643	

DATE MAILED: 11/29/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

<b>Office Action Summary</b>	<b>Application No.</b>	<b>Applicant(s)</b>
	10/656,643	WILLIAMES, GEOFFREY ALAN
	<b>Examiner</b>	<b>Art Unit</b>
	Jeffrey L. Gellner	3643

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

#### Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

#### Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 20 September 2004.

2a) This action is **FINAL**.                    2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

#### Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-6 and 13-19 is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) 1-6, 13-15 and 19 is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 16-18 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

#### Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

#### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a) All    b) Some \* c) None of:

1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

#### Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)

2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)

3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. \_\_\_\_\_

5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)

6) Other: See Continuation Sheet.

**Continuation of Attachment(s) 6). Other: translations of the Kubern and Kuznetsov et al. references. .**

## DETAILED ACTION

### *Election/Restrictions*

With the allowability over the art of record of independent claim 1, claim 2 is rejoined to the application.

### *Double Patenting*

The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and, *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

Claims 16 is rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1,3, and 4 of U.S. Patent No. 6,651,384 B1.

Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because both sets of claims are drawn to a nursery tray formed from a sheet of polymer material having thicker and thinner zones, spaced apart indexing apertures in the thicker zone, and a plurality of rows of cells.

### *Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112*

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 16-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

In claim 16, line 11, “said first flange section” lacks antecedent basis.

In claim 16, lines 12-13, the language “being substantially coplanar” is unclear because the element(s) to which the first flange sections are coplanar is not disclosed.

#### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. § 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 16 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Nicholson (US 5,274,953; document F on Applicant's 1449).

As to Claim 16, Nicholson discloses a nursery tray (Figs. 1 and 2) formed from a sheet of polymer material (“plastic seedling tray” of col. 2 lines 20-25) having spaced thicker and thinner defined zones (thicker is region around 18 in Fig. 2 and thinner is region, for example, around 12 in Fig. 2), each of the thicker zones having an upper surface (Figs. 1 and 2), the nursery tray having at least two rows of aligned, spaced apart indexing apertures (22 of Figs. 1 and 2) formed in the thicker zones of the sheet, and a plurality of rows spaced apart open top cells (11 of Figs. 1 and 2) located between the rows of indexing apertures, the cells adapted to be filled with

growing medium for plants (abstract), the tray having flanges (18 and 22) that extend latterally (in that they are situated on the sides) of the tray and being in the thicker zone.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC §103***

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. §103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claim 17 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nicholson (US 5,274,953; document F on Applicant's 1449) in view of Kuben (DE 4420189 C1).

As to Claim 17, the limitations of Claim 16 are disclosed as described above. Not disclosed are stiffening ribs between some of the cells, the stiffening ribs extending laterally relative to the rows of indexing apertures. Kuben, however, discloses stiffening ribs (26 of Fig. 9) between cells, the stiffening ribs extending laterally relative to the rows of indexing apertures (ribs 26 at the left and right ends of the tray in Fig. 9 extend laterally). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the tray of Nicholson by adding stiffening ribs as disclosed by Kuben so as to direct water flow to the plants.

***Allowable Subject Matter***

Claims 1-6, 13-15, and 19 are allowed over the art of record.

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Claim 18 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, 2nd paragraph, set forth in this Office action and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

***Response to Arguments***

Applicant's arguments, filed 20 September 2004, with respect to claims 1-6, as presently amended, have been fully considered and are persuasive. The double patenting and art rejections for these claims have been withdrawn.

***Conclusion***

**THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

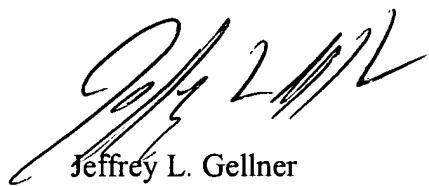
Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Jeffrey L. Gellner whose phone number is 703.305.0053. The

Examiner can normally be reached Monday through Thursday from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm. The Examiner can also be reached on alternate Fridays.

If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's Supervisor, Peter Poon, can be reached at 703.308.2574. The official fax telephone number for the Technology Center where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703.872.9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703.308.1113.



Jeffrey L. Gellner  
Primary Examiner